



**MICHIGAN ALLIANCE FOR**  
**CHARTER SCHOOL REFORM**  
Public Accountability for Public School Academies

**An invitation is extended to everybody who is concerned about the future of public education to join together with others across Michigan and become a member of this new organization, MACSR.**

**[www.charterschoolreform.org](http://www.charterschoolreform.org)**

Since 1999, when the mandated cap was imposed on state universities from opening anymore charter schools beyond 150, numerous studies and reports, including the Charter School Commission Report in 2002, and the Auditor General Findings of the Michigan Department of Education Public School Academies Unit in 2002, have raised concern about the lack of accountability and oversight given to charter schools by their local boards, oversight given to these entities by their authorizers, and oversight of the authorizers by the Department of Education.

The public reporting over the years has been presented from the biased viewpoint of the leading lobby group of charter schools, MAPSA, Michigan Association of Public Schools Academies. The State Board has presented only one mandated yearly report (96-97) to the legislative education committees on specific information about these schools, in the past ten years. Parents have been denied critical information in order to properly shop for a charter school as well as taxpayers have been denied a yearly analysis of their academic and financial status.

**MACSR** will share information that some would prefer not be made public. It will be with the power of people joining together in retaliation against a system that has had total disregard to the law, that the law will be changed to protect both our children and our education financial resources.

**Mary T. Wood**  
**Executive Director**

## **The State Board of Education Yearly Report on Public School Academies**

380.501a Not later than 1 year after the effective date of this section, and at least annually thereafter, the state board shall submit a comprehensive report with findings and recommendations, to the house and senate committees on education. The report shall evaluate public school academies generally, including but not limited to, an evaluation of whether public school academies are fulfilling the purposes specified in section 511(1).

The report shall also contain, for each public school academy

- 1) a copy of the academy's mission statement
  - 2) attendance statistics and dropout rates
  - 3) aggregate assessment test scores
  - 4) projections of financial stability
  - 5) number of and comments on supervisory visits by the authorizing body
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I had been asking for over 6 years "Where is the yearly mandated PSA report?" Finally, we have one and I am deeply disappointed. Here are some of my concerns.

- 1) The bulk of this report consists of charts and graphs showing comparisons of charter schools as a whole against the traditional schools. This material cannot be used in analyzing the success of any specific charter. The requirement was for specific information for EACH public school academy. Parents need this information when trying to determine if they should enroll their child in a particular PSA. This report is useless for parents who are the consumers of this product.
- 2) Only item #1, the mission statements for the individual schools, has been included. This is the easiest item for the public to acquire. The other items require some digging within the system by the system. Parents without computers cannot do this "homework" on their own.
- 3) With Winter MEAP scores published in May for the 2004-2005 school year, this report could include this information if it was submitted a few months later. The timing of this report needs to be adjusted.
- 4) I would like to suggest the legislative education committees to work with the Dept. of Education in revising the requirements of this report so the end result gives information that will be a useful analysis for parents, taxpayers, and legislators to evaluate the success or failures of this movement. A year to year report presenting the same information, in an easy to read format, could add to the level of accountability when this information is available for public scrutiny.

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Michigan Alliance for Charter School Reform  
Report to the House Education Committee  
June 1, 2005

# NEW CHARTER SCHOOL BILLS

May 2005

**HB #4782**---making it mandatory for EMOs to abide to Freedom of Information Act. No EMO should be getting any money unless they are accountable for it back to the academy board. Some people say the EMOs won't disclose certain spending involved with the academy, like payroll of teachers or their profit. How can a school just give the EMO money for teacher salaries without having an itemized breakdown of what they are paying for? An invoice should spell out what the EMO is getting reimbursed for. Without an invoice there should be no payment to the EMO from the academy. Anybody should be able to get all expense info from the academy since they are the ones writing the checks. I would not write a check without a clear invoice. If the academy cannot come up with this information the finger pointing should go to that board of directors. They are the ones accountable for the expenditure of the state aid. This bill is not necessary. Accountability is what is lacking.

**HB #4781**---this deals with conflict of interest on charter boards, basically family or employee relationships with the management company. This should be a given! Most authorizers are already (supposedly) addressing this in their board application. If it is still happening I believe that it is the authorizer's fault since they place those people on the public board. They make the final call. The real problem is who is submitting names of board members in the first place. Many applications are submitted by the for-profit management companies stating that they will be the managers of the school. The application requires the submission of names of people to sit on the public board. Once the board is in place they may chose to contract with entities to help with the operations of the school. Of course, they contract with the very same company that recruited them. This decision was actually made be the company itself NOT the public board. This is where the real conflict of interest lies. A company that will have a financial interest in the school should not be allowed to select people to sit on the decision making board of directors. The actions of these people appear to be more of a board of the management company instead of the board for the academy. Anything the EMO says is red stamped because the board often doesn't know much about running a school. Traditional districts have board members who do mega hours of in-service to understand their role better. Many charter boards get minimum training either from their authorizer or the EMO itself. This keeps the board in the dark and the management company in the driver's seat. If a board becomes too knowledgeable and starts asking questions of how things are operating, they may be removed from their seats or pressured to resign by the authorizer as has happened with Metro Charter Academy (Romulus) and Three Oaks Academy. People need to be looking deeper as to where the real conflict of interest is. A for-profit company should not be allowed to apply for a charter.

Reviewed by:  
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